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April is Hmong History Month in Marathon County

Wausau - Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today delivered a proclamation from Governor Jim Doyle declaring April Hmong History Month in Marathon County. Secretary Gassman delivered the proclamation to Peter Yang, Executive Director of the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association (WAHMA), citing the strong support and services provided to refugees from the Wat Tham Krabok camp in Thailand.

The Hmong people came to this country after they were persecuted for their allegiance to the United States during the Vietnam War. Wisconsin has the third-largest Hmong population outside of Laos, and more than 50,000 Hmong have chosen to make their homes in communities all across Wisconsin. They have made tremendous economic, cultural, and social impacts on our state and its residents.

"When the refugee camp in Thailand was closing, Marathon County opened its arms and embraced the new arrivals," Governor Doyle said. "The outpouring of support from residents, civic and business leaders and organizations like the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association have allowed the Hmong to successfully settle in this area. I am pleased to declare April as Hmong History month in Marathon County and provide an opportunity to focus on the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity the Hmong have brought to the area."

Almost 400 refugees settled in Marathon County in the last year, bringing the county's Hmong population to nearly 6,000. Said Secretary Gassman, "The success of Wisconsin agencies in serving Hmong refugees is well documented. Past arrivals have a median household income of Hmong in Wisconsin of \$36,000, compared to a national average of \$31,000; with more than half of the families owning their own homes and 90% employed. The newest arrivals are on a path to be even more successful, largely due to the work of this community."

The Hmong assisted the United States during the Vietnam War, when they were recruited by the CIA in the fight against Communist rebels in Laos. More than 300,000 Hmong, fearing retribution after the Communist takeover in 1975, fled to neighboring Thailand. This group of refugees is among the last remaining Hmong in Thailand

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